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764 at night, attack those of us who come within their reach with a shower of
775 pebbles and of small unripe fruit; or else they set themselves to sighing and weeping in a manner so sad, so sad, that we take fright and flee. Others seize us violently by the arm or shoulder and shake us. During the month following a burial we tremble with fright!" Elsewhere, he says, "Sometimes they stand upright on a path, as if coming to meet us: the apparition whirls round like a tornado of fire: it is all red, but only lasts a moment."

Mortuary rites sometimes performed before death.

764 To such a pitch has the fear of revengeful ghosts, combined with the
761 desire to witness oneself the magnificence of one's own mortuary rites, reached, that it is not unknown for a powerful man actually to perform his own mortuary rites before his death.[1] Thus Godefroy tells us: "Meltelum is the happiest man on earth, since, feeling himself ageing, he has already performed his own mortuary rites three years ago. Observing the infirmities of age creeping upon him, and having only limited confidence in his kinsfolk's piety, this cunning old man who had so often deceived his compatriots took it into his head one fine day to order the performance of his obsequies and to sacrifice all his 'death pigs.' He is now well assured that the blessing of the Ambrim fire is accorded to him in advance; he knows he will not be eaten by Le-hev-hev, but that he will have the good fortune and the honour of going to take part in the endless palavers of his ancestors. Now, he has nothing to do but wait; and," says the reverend father, not with *arrière-pensée*, "he thinks less than ever about Ta-ghar up in the moon, or about Le-hev-hev who has already eaten his pigs. So, every day now he is to be seen strolling down the path towards the sea, his face cheery and uppish in spite of his age. He has indeed attained the summit of joy in respect of duty done and pride well satisfied."

764 The rites referred to above are almost certainly the feast called *matean*, described on pp. 544 ff. Melteg-tò, of the village of Ruruar on Atchin, went so far as to build for himself a huge stone mausoleum in the shape of a shark, and to perform similar rites long before his death, the consequences of which will be described in a future volume.

The Cave

775 *Each Small Island has its appropriate cave on the mainland for those of low rank; said to contain fire.*

I have already mentioned that, according to Godefroy's account of beliefs now held on Vao, twenty years since I was there, the ghosts of

[1] See p. 545.

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764 probably not unlike the large mausoleum built on Atchin in the shape of a shark, which will be described in a future volume.[1]

MORTUARY RITES

I obtained three accounts of mortuary rites: an initial, brief account dealing with the death of a young man, and a later, fuller one regarding the death of a *mer-sean*, followed by a few notes regarding the mortuary rites for women. They are very far from exhausting the subject. I will give the rites for a *mer-sean* first.

It will be noted that while the Fifth Day is an important one, no special importance is attached to any kind of observance on the Thirtieth Day, thus showing the early cultural layer to which these rites belong.

MORTUARY RITES FOR AN OLD MAN (MER-SEAN)

Attitude towards the death of an old man.

761 While every effort is made to preserve the life of a young man who has fallen sick, nothing is done to prevent the death of a man so old as to be called *mer-sean*. The native's usual attitude towards death as a tragic event due to the anger of offended ghosts or to evil magic undergoes a complete transformation when the death is that of a very old man. For not only has he fulfilled his life and died a natural death, but his power over the living, great during life, will be immensely increased once he has crossed the line into the regions of the departed. As my informant expressed it, "at the death of a young man we are sorry that his life has been cut off, so we fast (*taur*). But for an old man, his time is finished and it is right that he should die, so we do not mourn, but adorn ourselves."

This attitude is borne out by their behaviour, for where, in the case of a younger man, the weeping is long and to a great degree genuine, for an old man, though both men and women must make a good show of weeping, this is only "make-believe" and is soon over, for he has died at a good old age, and none is responsible for his death.

Manner of death. Regulation of debts.

763 I did not myself witness any deaths on Vao. My experience on Atchin is, however, confirmed by Godefroy with regard to Vao, in that he

[1] The only piece of special ritual he mentions in connexion with the construction of this tomb is the ritual bathing of the workers, who at the same time chant. When the day's work was finished the workers "went in a group to bathe, and, on this occasion, the bathing was turned into a ritual act, the bathers singing a slow majestic and beautiful religious chant . . . [as] they stood in the sea with the water up to their chests and with their arms outstretched along its surface. All sing: but from time to time two or three sink down into the water, swim several strokes, come up again and take their place in the song. After half an hour of singing, when all the verses were finished, the bathing regained its secular character" (Godefroy, 1, 1934, p. 213).

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founded by a woman.[1] But more usually the practitioner is a man, called *mara man*,[2] meaning "man of power," or, if we translate *man* as "magic," then literally "magician." We have already seen such an expert magician at work in the making of upright slit gongs.[3] We have seen also the prominent rôle played by a special type of magician called *na-wogh* in charming each Maki-man during the period of feverish activity leading up to the great sacrifice in order to assist them in collecting the correct number of sacrificial boars.[4] Yet another specialist, this time called *mara kur*, is called in to perform, with magic rites, the delicate task of exactly placing the outrigger booms on the hull of a new sea-going canoe,[5] and later to ensure fertility in pigs and successful trading by placing a sow, with due rites, in the bow.[6] At death yet another magician presents charmed leaves to those who have buried the corpse in order that they may purify themselves by washing with these leaves in the sea.[7]

These are but a few instances of the immense variety of magical rites practised by individuals in the interests of the community. Innumerable other rites exist, covering almost every aspect of life, ranging from those of public utility to those applicable only to individuals, and it is safe to say that there is *no* adult member of the community unacquainted with some form of magic which he performs on occasion either for his own benefit or for that of others, in return for a fee commensurate with the importance of his act.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SOME MAGICAL ACTS

I have unfortunately no detailed information of how, in the cases cited above, the magicians set about their work. I have, however, a few details from Vao regarding (1) the appeal to ancestral and other ghosts in case of sickness, (2) other cures, and (3) weather magic.

(1) Appeal to Ancestral and Other Ghosts in Case of Sickness

This needs the assistance of a diviner to find out what ghost it is that is causing the sickness.

As we have seen, the only kind of death that is considered as being due to what we should consider "natural" causes is that of an old man who dies in the fulness of time without visible disease. In such a case it is recognised that there is nothing that can be done to prolong life. He duly settles his affairs, as described on p. 536, and his kinsmen's

[1] See pp. 633-4.
[2] Compare Banks Islands and Maewo *gimana*, Santa Cruz *mendeka*, Florida *mane kisu* and *mane nggeha vigona*, all meaning "magician" (Codrington, 3, pp. 195-201).
[3] See pp. 354 ff. [4] See pp. 379, 422. [5] See p. 466.
[6] See p. 467. [7] See p. 560.

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attention is devoted to preparing for the elaborate mortuary rites rather than towards seeking any kind of so-called "supernatural" causation. In all other cases, except where caused by an obvious wound, sickness and death are ascribed to supernatural causes, chief among which are some act of malignant magic (though this is much rarer in the Small Islands than in most other parts of Malekula), or the fact that the sick man has in some way offended the ghost of a departed kinsman or else has been wantonly attacked out of sheer blind revenge by the ghost of some man who has been killed in battle and therefore roams the world in search of victims.

In all such cases a diviner is needed to diagnose the cause, that is to say to discover what sorcerer or ghost is responsible for the sick man's condition. If a sorcerer, the only cure is to persuade him by threats or payment to remove by counter-magic the sickness that he has caused. If a ghost, it must first be discovered what individual ghost it is. For this purpose a practitioner (*mara man*) is called in who, looking at the sick man, sings to himself a special song and by this means finds out what ghost has entered into him. Then he tells the patient who the ghost is.

(*a*) *Ghost of a kinsman.*

In almost all cases, such an initial diagnosis will point to the fact that the ghost (*ta-mat*) in question is that of a departed relative [1] offended at the omission of some ritual act or at the commission of some accidental slight. In this case the practitioner tells the patient whose ghost it is, and says, "I think you must have done him some wrong, to cause him to enter into you in this way." The sick man then thinks it over, and remembers something or other that he has done that must have offended this particular ghost. The practitioner then tells the son or brother of the sick man to bring a leafy branch of the kind called *rumbu log-log*, and when brought places it in the sick man's right hand to hold. When the sick man has held it for a little time, the child or brother takes the branch from him and places it on the grave of the offended ghost, and addresses him, saying, "You have gone into this man; come out from him now. You have made him sick; if you leave him now he will recover." Then he lays a money-mat (*mangau*) on the grave and ties a pig to it as an offering. The size of the pig depends on the importance of the ghost and on the gravity of the disease. If the sick man gets well, the pig is subsequently removed. If he remains sick, the pig is left there until the patient either gets well or dies.

(*b*) *Ghost of one slain in battle.*

It is, however, possible that the diagnosis points to the fact that the ghost that has entered in is that of a man who has died a violent death.

[1] This may be from either side of his family. Instances given include the brother, father, father's father and mother's brother.